

Fifty years ago today, I attended my first Bob Dylan concert at the Mosque Theater, in Newark, New Jersey. I went with my older brother and younger (at the time) stepbrother who could've cared less. Our parents bought us the tickets, and thinking back it was the first concert I went to without parents. Arriving at the theater, my brother ran into some friends from the camp he attended the previous summer, who were flipping out because Dylan a few moments before had walked right by them on his way into the theater.

Dylan was not yet a star (though on the way) and the hall was not even close to being sold out as we found out when we took our seats in the balcony, nervously sneaking down to the orchestra during intermission.

I can't remember all the songs he did that night. Our only album was *Freewheelin'* and three quarters of the concert was songs that were not on the album. He started with "The Times, They Are A-Changin'," and followed with "Hollis Brown," which I remember because I immediately recognized the melody as "Pretty Polly," a song I had on a Pete Seeger album. He also did "Who Killed Davey Moore?" which I'd seen Seeger sing the previous June, "Talking John Birch Society Blues," "Talkin' World War III Blues," "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright," "Walls of Red Wing" "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," and "Blowin' In The Wind," introduced as "Here's the song *Newsweek* said I didn't write." It just so happened that five months earlier my family had moved to the town where the person who said he wrote it (and later retracted that) lived. It's possible that some of the other songs I heard that night were "Eternal Circle," "Restless Farewell," and "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll." The encore was "With God On Our Side."

I knew leaving the show that this was a concert unlike any I'd previously attended. The person onstage was looser, funnier and wilder than anyone I'd seen up to that point. What I couldn't have possibly imagined that night as 12-years-old, was that 50 years later I'd still be going to see him and that I'd still be excited at the end of the night. Back then I couldn't have imagined seeing anybody more than 100 times.

That night I had no idea of the totally crazy ride I was in for or that I'd see him on the same stage two years later with a rock and roll band. I had no idea after that night two years later that I wouldn't see him perform again for more than eight years. I had no clue he'd become the mad poetic absurdist rocker, the cowboy mystic in hiding, a country crooner and that he'd reappear as the person you thought he was only to disappear and reappear as someone else. I had no idea

he'd reinvent himself a thousand different ways and never stop. I had no idea I'd own hundreds of bootlegs or even that a bootleg recording would exist. I had no idea that this one person would cause me to meet many new friends from all over the world. And I had no idea of all the different kinds of music his music would lead me to.

But that night, he was just a new folksinger, (the term singer-songwriter did not exist) singing songs I'd never heard before, and some of those songs I wouldn't hear again until years later. But I knew that night, he was singing for me.